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As illustrated by survey studies of four large school systems, studies of school systems may be sponsored (1) by outside groups interested in the schools, (2) by boards of education, or (3) jointly by agencies both within and outside the school system. A study of the Cincinnati school system was sponsored by a citizens' group. Studies in Columbus, Detroit, and Washington, D.C., were sponsored by their boards of education. Three of the studies--Cincinnati, Columbus, and Washington--were conducted by university based agencies. The Detroit study was conducted by a citizens' commission working with university staff assistance. School system attitudes toward study processes, teams, and outcomes appear to differ directly with the nature of study sponsorship and financing. Recommendations that issue from district financed inquiry and have the support of school officials are more generally accepted than recommendations produced by a study with external sponsorship. Field study particulars include (1) viewing the sponsoring organization as a client that influences the direction of the study, and (2) recognizing the need for detailed implementation strategies. (JK)

STUDY SPONSORSHIP AND OVERALL STUDY DESIGN

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A Comparative Analysis of Methodologies

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STUDY SPONSORSHIP AND OVERALL DESIGN: A DISCUSSION OF THE CINCINNATI, COLUMBUS, DETROIT AND WASHINGTON D.C. SURVEYS

Introduction

My task in the analysis of these four studies[1] is to deal with the problem of sponsorship and less comprehensively with questions of overall design. You have heard other members of the symposium deal with more specific methodological comparisons. I would like therefore to begin by expanding upon the concept of spcnsorship. My use of the term sponsorship is rather obvious. I am referring to an organization, a school district or group of school districts, a combination of organizations and/or school districts that contract for, support and receive studies of school systems. Sponsors are in fact clients for those who offer study services. On an initial inspection this may not appear to be a useful or relevant focus for discussion. On the other hand if we are to concern ourselves with educational reform or fundamental change we must be concerned with the implementation of recommendations. It is presence or absence of impact upon school systems that makes sponsorship a matter of basic significance.

The school study or survey movement in America has suffered intensive criticism over the years. I share with Lazarsfeld, Sewell and Wilensky their distaste for energy consuming argumentation over basic and applied research. It is the ensuing knowledge (the product) that is basic and not the research or the purpose for which it was originally undertaken.[2] I find attractive their term "field-induced research" and the further refinement of that concept into two categories: field-induced research without significant findings and the

other, field-induced work with significant contributions to basic knowledge. Two examples of the latter are cited: the first is Barnard's analytical classic The Functions of the Executive and the second is Stauffer's synthesis of many studies done during World War II for managerial purposes which lead to his notion of relative deprivation. As Lazarsfeld et.al. have pointed out, the critics of field-induced work have been misled by a confusion between it and service jobs.[3] Purely service jobs are not the province of the university. Individuals who have engaged in either of these types of activity (service jobs or field-induced work leading to new knowledge) have enjoyed little or no prestige however and much of their labor has essentially been ignored by the academic community. At the same time academicians have commented frequently that we really don't know very much about school systems. This is not accurate. There is in existence actually a wealth of data about schools, their organization, structure, and finance and the like if we choose to examine it.[4]

Study Sponsorship

At the present time many large school systems are being surveyed or studied in some way. Today these studies seem to vary somewhat from those of a half century ago. One of the most important variations is in their sponsorship. There appear to be three types or categories prominent at the moment.

Recently several surveys have been initiated, financed and sponsored by outside groups who possess interest in the schools. In the past seven or eight years a few such externally sponsored studies have received national recognition. Cincinnati, San Francisco, and

Portland are examples. In these three cases the momentum for the work was generated primarily among citizens and/or organizations outside of the schools with special interests in the public school systems of those places.

In other cities studies have been initiated, sponsored, and financed totally by boards of education. In this category one could place the recent studies of Louisville-Jefferson County, Kentucky; the Columbus, Ohio study reviewed here; the Hartford, Connecticut study; the Chicago study (Havighurst et.al.) and the Duluth survey.

In addition to these two sponsorship types there are studies that have co-sponsorship, co-initiation and in some cases joint financing. In such examples boards of education and community groups cooperate and the study teams are responsible to and report to citizens' groups and boards of education. Recent efforts in Milwaukee, Nashville and Syracuse fall into this category.

In the citizen sponsored and the school district sponsored categories few if any are pure types. Whether the effort be citizen or school district initiated, often there exists varying degrees of cooperation or contact between the citizens' groups and school officials.

In each of the four studies reviewed in this symposium the client relationship with the study group varied. All four are examples of field-induced work in Lazarsfeld, Sewell and Wilensky's terms.

Cincinnati

The Cincinnati sponsor was a community organization entitled Cincinnatians United for Good Schools. The study agency was the Midwest Administration Center at the University of Chicago. The Cincinnati citizens group, through its chairman, initiated a request to the

Chairman of the Department of Education at the University of Chicago. The University accepted the invitation and the work of the study was processed through the Midwest Administration Center and directed by a field staff in Cincinnati. The work proceeded under the direction of a five member policy and steering committee which assumed responsibility for the report and participated in the formal reporting of the study to the client in August of 1968. The school system cooperated with the study team and participated through providing access to data as well as assisting in its collection. The board of education and the administrative staff attended the semi-public presentation of the formal report to Cincinnatians United for Good Schools.

Columbus

The Columbus Board of Education was the sponsor of the work in that city. The President of the Board of Education approached the President of The Ohio State University inviting him to form a university commission to undertake an analysis of the problems facing the Columbus Public Schools, especially those of the inner city. The University responded by accepting the invitation and proceeded to name a six member commission (Deans of the Colleges of Administrative Science, Behavioral and Social Science, Law, Medicine and Education plus the Director of the Vocational-Technical Education Research and Development Center) to design and conduct the inquiry.

The board of education initiated the request for study, allocated funds for its support and received the study report upon its completion in June of 1968. The final report was produced in the name of the university; planned, designed and reported by the commission, and accomplished through a twenty-seven member intra-university,

inter-disciplinary team.

Detroit

The study group-client relationship is somewhat unique in the case of Detroit. The board of education was the sponsor but the work was completed through the Detroit High School Study Commission. The Commission (composed of twenty-six laymen) organized twenty-two study groups which produced individual reports on each of the Detroit high schools and presented them to the board of education in December of 1967. A comprehensive report document was completed in June 1968. The Commission had two professional staff members (University of Michigan) available during the study period who were supported by the Detroit Public Schools.

Washington D.C.

The Board of Education of the Washington D.C. Public Schools was the sponsor of the study conducted by Teachers College Columbia University. The motivation for the request came in part from actions on the part of the House Education Committee which in 1965 called for an investigation of D.C. Schools. The study was financed by the board of education and received by the board and administrative staff in September of 1967. The work itself was done by thirty-three task forces each headed by a specialist and coordinated by the study director at Columbia.

To summarize the variations in sponsorship, we have in these four examples one case (Cincinnati) of citizen group sponsorship and three examples of boards of education as clients. In Detroit the study agency was a Citizens Commission working with university staff assistance. In the other three cases study agencies were university based:

Cincinnati--University of Chicago; Columbus--The Ohio State University; Washington D.C.--Columbia. The Columbus work involved personnel from The Ohio State University only. Cincinnati and Washington study teams included scholars from across the nation.

Problems and Issues in the Study of Large Systems

Sponsorship and Impact

It is important for us to understand the differences that exist among the three general categories of large city system study sponsorships. Attitudes toward study processes, teams, and outcomes appear to differ directly with the nature of sponsorship and financing. School district initiated and financed surveys may be better received and their recommendations more thoroughly implemented than studies initiated outside of the system and under external sponsorship. That is not to say that all school district sponsored studies are warmly received or that their recommendations are implemented without resistance or misgivings. Nor is it to say that all externally sponsored studies are rejected out of hand. Most people, especially professional educators, dislike others telling them what they ought to be doing. The psychological impact for those who serve in school districts is different depending upon the source of energy leading to the study itself. It seems to be more difficult for professionals to ignore recommendations that issue from district financed inquiry and have the support of school officials (including board members) than recommendations produced by an external organization sponsored study.

It would appear useful to design an impact study of recent large city surveys such as we are reviewing here. Should such work be

done it would be instructive if comparisons were drawn between these three sponsorship categories vis-a-vis success in implementation. No one, to my knowledge, knows the magnitude of public and private investment in this type of study of educational problems. Nor do we know the extent to which the recommendations of thoughtful investigators are acted upon by school authorities. The absence of such data suggests a number of interesting lines of inquiry. For example, we might productively survey the survey movement in investment terms. We might identify the range and kinds of inquiries that go forward, appraise the magnitude of this investment and relate the investment to the implementation success records which follow. We could, as we are doing here, concern ourselves with the structure and design of these inquiries and make comparative analyses of findings and recommendations, especially those that focus on critical urban questions.

Problems and Parameters of Study

The overall designs vary rather substantially. It is difficult to analyze them meaningfully. Client initiated study is shaped by client need obviously. The client or sponsor is motivated to seek outside assistance in the search for problem solutions. In these four examples critical issues in each city and school system were probably responsible. Often the client is not clear about the problems most in need of solution as is illustrated by the request of the Columbus Board of Education to The Ohio State University. Their request for help included the need for clarifying and defining the most serious problems confronting the Columbus Schools. Similarly the Cincinnatians United for Good Schools had some central questions which they felt deserved examination but allowed the University of Chicago policy and steering

committee considerable freedom in developing the parameters of the total survey. The work in Detroit was generated out of problems in secondary schools, especially the student boycott of Northern High School in April of 1966. This accounts for the focus on secondary schools. Washington D.C's. interest was piqued by a general climate of urban and educational unrest. The magnitude of public, federal government and professional disquiet probably contributed to the freedom that the Teachers College team received in establishing the boundaries of their work.

The clients appear as a rule to present practical issues to study agencies and then expect those agencies to translate them into researchable questions. The broader the original assignment the greater is the opportunity for producing new knowledge. The scholar dealing in applied science usually has reasonable freedom to design the work so that he can satisfy the pragmatic requirements of the client and meet the "new knowledge" expectation of his academic colleagues as well.

The applied educationist (the person who engages in field-induced work) has considerable opportunity in most client relationships to achieve two objectives. The first is the one mentioned above, i.e. contribute to new knowledge in a genuine way and the second is to establish more firmly the integrity of client-initiated field study within the academic community. The internal professional constraints on the development of applied educational science are much more severe than those which exist externally as imposed by the client. Miller speaks to this matter in applied sociology with special reference to its struggle to achieve respectability. He argues that the applied person in sociology allows himself to be subdued by colleague norms to

the extent that he cannot achieve the independence required for developing field research approaches "...which are suitable to the research tasks, which contribute both to policy and to sociology, and which teach us how to deal effectively with an expanding range of problems."[6]

Unfinished Efforts

Most field-induced studies (these four are not exceptions) are half-studies at best. They are partially finished when they are reported. They identify what is to be done but stop short of specifying how it is to be done. This is much more than an ends-means problem. In some of the studies the ends (goals to be achieved) and the means are specified. But the detailed strategies for implementation are missing.

Kurt Lewin argued that for field action to result from social scientist diagnosis three dimensions must be present: (1) the objective, clearly delineated; (2) the path to the goal and the available means have to be determined; and (3) a strategy for action has to be developed.[7] Our normal practice is to stop at two.

One related observation: those who make field studies err in the assumption that those who receive recommendations have the capacity and the skills to implement them even when they want to. We can set aside those cases where professionals have neither the capability nor the desire to implement. In fact the applied scientist would render a genuine service by determining implementation capability in advance of accepting a field initiated assignment. He probably should not accept those where that capacity is absent.

Retrospect and Prospect

A few days ago I spent two hours with representatives of a large city school system. They were interested in discussing the subject of a large scale study of their system. The situation is quite typical. The district is faced with obsolete and inadequate physical facilities and an organizational pattern which in their judgment is also archaic. Similarly the curriculum is largely irrelevant to today's requirements, especially for inner city populations, but for most other youngsters as well.

They would like their school system studied but more than that they would like a blueprint for implementation. They would like to have some assurance that the product of an investigation will be large scale change--really a complete transformation of the school system. The administrative offices of the district are apparently (like most) lined with the carcasses of previous studies, surveys, reports and the like. What the central administrative staff feels to be essential is a set of steps (PERT chart type) that includes guidelines for soliciting and receiving support from all public and professional sectors of interest.

The situation seems to be one where effected parties--citizen, board members, students, administrators, teachers--are crying out for change. But they need a social, economic, political and educational road map. And they need it today.

Who can respond? Who can do that kind of job? To respond means that the applied scientists must have the capacity to chart the future of a large institution. The members of that study team would in effect (1) be selecting from policy alternatives those they wished to

endorse and (2) be specifying the means to their achievement. Included among the means would have to be a design for implementation that represented fantastic understanding of the local setting, its political, social and economic dimensions, both present and future.

To conclude, we have critiqued four studies of large city school systems. They were prompted in each case by local uneasiness about how well the systems were coping with their problems. One survey was initiated and financed by an outside community organization. The other three were board of education initiated. Local conditions prompted some variety in how problems were defined and approached although there were some similarities too. There seem to be some promising research areas in the analyses of the study of large city systems, past and future. There is likewise a need for detailed attention to the specification of strategies for implementation as a part of future efforts of this kind.

Footnotes

[1]Roald F. Campbell, et.al., Report of the Cincinnati School Survey, (Cincinnati: Cincinnatians United for Good Schools, August, 1968); Luvern L. Cunningham, et.al., Report to the Columbus Board of Education, (Columbus: The Advisory Commission on Problems Facing the Columbus Public Schools, 1968); Edward C. Cushman, et.al. Report of the Detroit High School Study Commission, (Detroit: The Commission, June, 1968); and A. Harry Passow, Toward Creating a Model Urban School System; A Study of the Washington, D.C. Public Schools, (New York: Teachers College, Columbia University, 1967).

[2]Paul F. Lazarsfeld, William H. Sewell, and Harold L. Wilensky, eds., The Uses of Sociology. New York: Basic Books, Inc., Publishers, 1967, p. xxiv.

[3]Ibid.

[4]Paul F. Lazarsfeld and Sam D. Sieber, Organizing Educational Research. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1964, p. 6.

[5]Lazarsfeld, Sewell, and Wilensky, op. cit., p. xxvi.

[6]S. M. Miller, "Prospect: The Applied Sociology of the Center-City," in Alvin W. Gouldner and S. M. Miller, Applied Sociology. New York: The Free Press, 1965, pp. 451-52.

[7]Kurt Lewin, "Feedback Problems of Social Diagnosis and Action" reprinted in Walter Buckley, ed., Modern Systems Research for the Behavioral Scientist. Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company, 1968, p. 441.